

Community Conversations

for Fauquier County

Part II. STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

March 7, 2017



Fauquier County, Virginia



INTRODUCTION

Fauquier County has maintained its legacy of a working landscape weaving together farming, industry, and thriving towns, villages, and countryside in the face of tremendous regional population and economic growth pressures during the past few decades. The County's vision has played a key role in this success since 1967 by encouraging development in existing towns and villages, and maintaining the County's bucolic and economically-productive rural lands. Fauquier County finds itself at a critical juncture in 2017. In anticipation of an update to its comprehensive plan the County undertook to reinvigorate and help achieve its vision through a year-long process called Community Conversations – Stepping Stones to the Future. The process yielded the strategic action plan contained in this portion of the report.

The outcome of Fauquier County's Community Conversations on the one hand is an affirmation of the County's vision, including especially the disposition and form of future settlement. On the other hand, this strategic action plan is a road map for achieving the vision. It sets the stage for an integrated approach to land use planning, infrastructure investment, and economic development strategy that can serve as a blueprint to guide decisions in the coming months and years.

THE VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In recent years Fauquier County formally adopted this vision statement: *"Fauquier County is a thriving community that honors its natural and cultural resources, agricultural heritage and rural landscape while building a sustainable economy and promoting outstanding services and growth within defined service districts."*

Accompanying this desired vision of the future, the County also identified four guiding principles that capture the primary interests and elements that will allow the County to achieve this long term vision. These principles include:

- *The County's natural and cultural heritages are intrinsic to the County's character.*
- *The County's unique communities, from rural and agricultural to village settlements to urbanized, are integral to the County's collective identity.*
- *A strong and diverse local economy is necessary for the sustained vitality of the County.*
- *Effective public facilities and infrastructure are important components of a thriving community.*

THE ACTION PLAN

The following strategic action plan is built on the above vision and guiding principles and is designed to achieve this vision. It is built around three themes, which reflect what citizens identified during the Community Conversations project as the most important components of the vision:

- A. Strong Rural Lands and Economy
- B. Expanded Business and Industry
- C. Thriving Communities and Services

In support of each vision theme is a set of 13 targeted strategies, which provide direction for the County Board of Supervisors and staff, as well as potential public and private sector partners in setting and implementing policies, and prioritizing investments for infrastructure and programs. The three vision themes are expanded into a total of 13 strategies, as shown in figure 1, below. Supporting each strategy is a detailed set of actions to implement them, which are detailed in the subsequent pages. Whereas the strategies are high level and indicate a general direction for policy and investment, the actions are specific and indicate steps the County in partnership with other local champions and "supporting cast" can take to achieve its vision. The framework of strategies and actions, along with anticipated benefits, measures of success and potential implementation elements are explained in detail in the following pages.

Figure 1 - Action Plan Framework

Stepping Stones to our Future

Community Conversations for Fauquier County

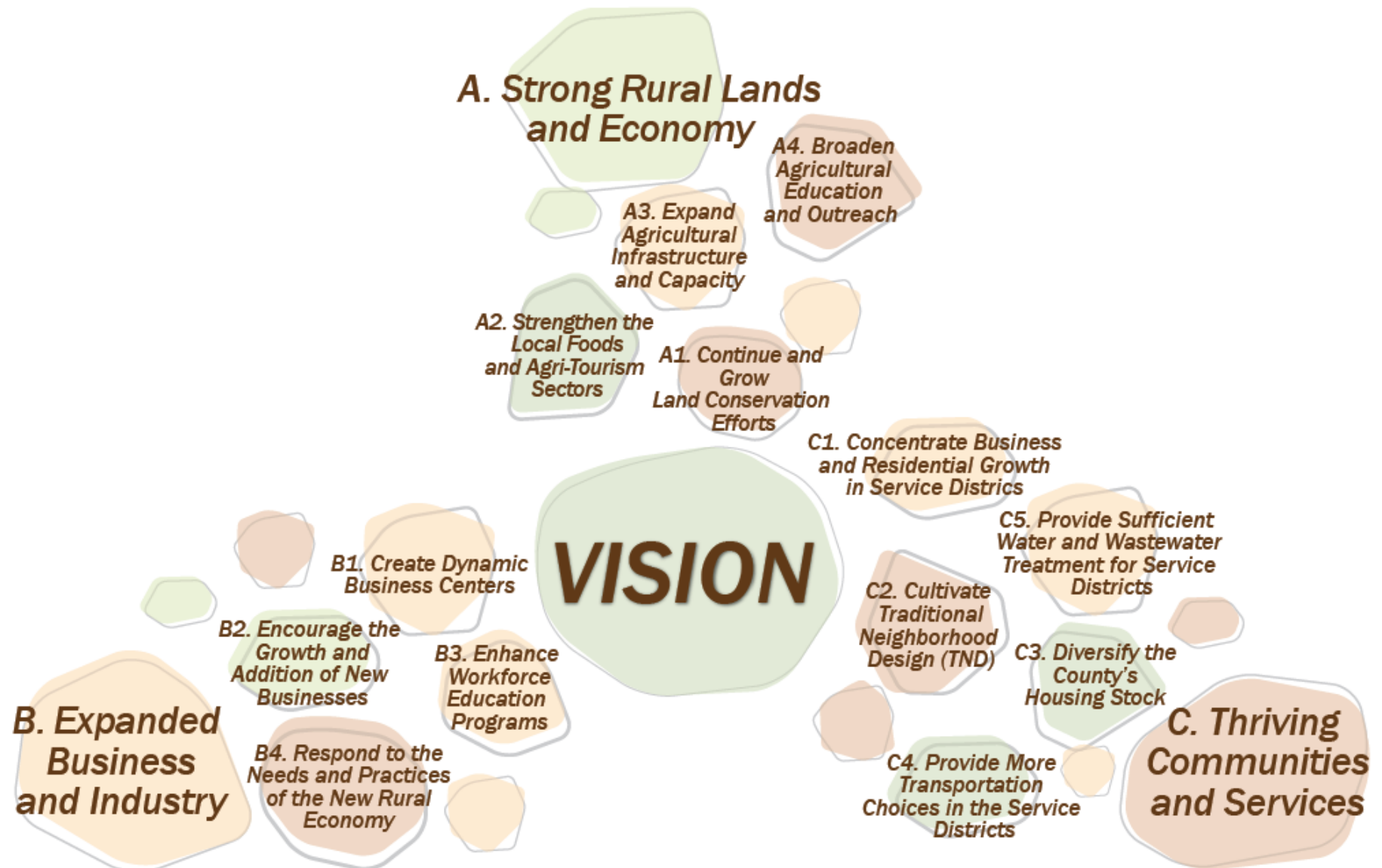


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Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A1: Continue and Grow Land Conservation Efforts

Strategy Narrative

In the big picture, the County's vision of preserving an agricultural economy can't be accomplished without having adequate land dedicated to farming. This strategy recognizes that the County's legacy of successful protection of rural lands has allowed agriculture to remain a major economic force and seeks to maintain that legacy through a multi-faceted approach. Rather than calling for a radical change of course, this strategy calls for continuing and expanding existing successful efforts such as sliding scale zoning and voluntary programs that create incentives for preservation of prime agricultural lands. In summary, the strategy includes actions that continue and strengthen the County's Rural Land Conservation programs, while continuing to monitor and measure progress. It also includes focusing efforts on preserving the most important land for farming in the most cost-efficient manner. In addition to maintaining the existing low-density sliding scale zoning regulations, it is important to focus on continuing and providing assistance for the voluntary programs such as Purchase of Development Rights, Conservation Easement donations, and Ag and Forestal Districts.

Benefits/Outcomes

Having enough good and affordable farmland available for farmers is the most fundamental strategy for preserving the rural environment and supporting a viable local agricultural economy. To the extent the farmland base is maintained or expanded, benefits are expected to include:

- Stable cost of farmland
- Maintain available land resources for the farming industry
- Preserve scenic quality of the rural landscape
- Support for concentrating population growth in the Service Districts
- Maintain or improve local air and water quality through the preservation of forest cover, open land, and permeable surfaces
- Maintain the critical mass of farming activity necessary for an agricultural culture and economy
- Support individuals to continue farming practices

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The amount of land in agricultural production
- The amount of land in forest cover
- The average value of farmland
- The economic return to individual farm operations
- The number of new residential lots created and the number of new houses built in the rural areas
- The low rate of conversion of farmland to other uses
- Local air and water quality



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A1: Continue and Grow Land Conservation Efforts

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
A 1.1. Maintain sliding scale zoning and the use of non-common open space in the subdivision of land	Identify key features or landscapes to protect or preserve within the non-developed areas	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors
A 1.2. Continue Purchase of Development Rights Program to preserve active and productive farmland	Regularly monitor and update market value assumptions to offer fair and effective incentives	Department of Agricultural Development	Board of Supervisors
A 1.3. Continue assistance, and maintain ongoing stewardship, regarding conservation easements; Refine the evaluation criteria to put priority on preserving actively farmed land and parcels with strong conservation value.	As possible, promote the conservation of contiguous, rather than dispersed, land parcels in order to support ecological integrity. Encourage the provision for the leasing of land for farming activities within conservation easements.	Department of Agricultural Development Department of Community Development	County Attorney Department of Agricultural Development
A 1.4. Continue use value assessment	Assess natural lands at “use value” rather than “market value”	Commissioner of the Revenue	Board of Supervisors
A 1.5. Support efforts by the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District and other entities in the protection and restoration of riparian areas and water quality	Coordinate with possible future well-head protection plan efforts for public water supply stations	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District Department of Community Development	Department of Agricultural Development
A 1.6. Continue Ag and Forestal Districts	Ag and Forestal Districts provide significant benefit to the landowner through eligibility for land use taxation and to the community by preserving land	Agricultural and Forestal District Advisory Committee	Department of Community Development
A 1.7. Continue to identify, document and seek protection of historic and cultural resources	Coordinate efforts with natural and heritage tourism promotion efforts	Department of Community Development	Department of Economic Development



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A2: Strengthen the Local Foods and Agri-tourism Sectors

Strategy Narrative

Although locally sourced foods are still a tiny portion of total household expenditures on food, this sector of the food economy has seen some of the most rapid growth in the past few years. Several parts of Virginia, such as the Piedmont region and the rural fringe around Northern Virginia are seeing huge growth in interest and sales of local foods. With six million people within a 50-mile radius of the County, and a rise in the local food movement regionally and nationally, Fauquier is well positioned to expand further into this market with specialized products and direct sales and marketing, including new types of products, new markets, and new methods of marketing, to create greater “value-added” activities for agricultural enterprises, including farm co-ops, farmers markets, CSAs, a regional food hub* and various forms of agri-tourism. Fauquier County has the best geographic position and the strongest, most diverse farm economy of the localities within the Washington metro area. This is also evidenced by the growing interest in agri-tourism in the County. In particular, the easy drive from major metro areas makes the County attractive as a tourist portal to agriculturally-themed visitor experiences. This strategy builds on the work of the Local Foods Policy Council, Virginia Tech’s local Cooperative Extension program and the RRRRC’s Regional Marketing Program. It supports further engagement with these programs, coupled with strategic marketing and promotion initiatives to strengthen and grow these vital and successful aspects of the overall agricultural economy.

Note - A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

Benefits/Outcomes

In order for agriculture to remain a competitive and viable land use within a large and growing metropolitan area, farms need to become more economically productive by increasing per-acre revenue and/or lowering production costs. Benefits from these kinds of improvements include:

- Higher farm revenues and incomes
- Greater stability and sustainability within the agricultural sector
- Greater economic diversification within the ag sector
- Greater regional identity of Fauquier County as a place for agriculture, direct farm purchases, and agri-tourism

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured, where data is available, through criteria such as:

- Average net farm incomes
- Gross revenue per acre
- More acreage in specialty crops and products
- Lower average age of farmers
- Number and gross revenues of direct sales entities (farmers markets, CSAs, etc.)
- Percentage of total farm products that are sold directly to end users rather than to commodity markets
- Identify number of agri-tourism venues and facilities



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A2: Strengthen the Local Foods and Agri-tourism Sectors

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
A 2.1. Promote the production of farm products suited for local and direct sales to regional customers, including residents, restaurants, stores, co-ops, and markets	Coordinate with market research regarding products of high demand in regional markets.	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Department of Agricultural Development	Department of Economic Development
A 2.2. Proactively support implementation of the Rappahannock-Rapidan Farm and Food Plan. Support the Local Foods Policy Council to promote and coordinate efforts to expand local markets and agri-tourism, including establishing a regional food hub and a coordinated promotion and “branding” of the County as a unique agricultural area	Continue active engagement with farmers to respond to changing needs and opportunities.	Department of Agricultural Development	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission Department of Economic Development Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS)
A 2.3. Promote the creation of direct marketing initiatives such as farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)	Support opportunities for customers to visit farms (if desired by farmers) to further develop connections between food, place, and community	Department of Agricultural Development	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Piedmont Environmental Council Buy Local Program
A 2.4. Refine zoning regulations to balance the opportunities for agri-tourism with concerns about intensity of traffic and other non-farm activities in rural areas	Actively work with those interested in exploring new rural economic opportunities to find appropriate balances as possible.	Department of Community Development	Department of Agricultural Development
A 2.5. Continue and expand collaboration with marketing assistance with Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension, and cooperation with RRRC's Regional Marketing Program	Consider local agricultural promotion efforts within scope of regional and statewide efforts.	Department of Agricultural Development	Department of Economic Development
A 2.6. Continue and expand the annual Fall Farm Tour; explore collaboration with regional neighbors	Promote both within local communities and nearby metropolitan areas.	Department of Agricultural Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Department of Economic Development



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A3: Expand Agricultural Infrastructure and Capacity

Strategy Narrative

Farming in Fauquier County is in a competitive environment with respect to national and even global commodity markets and agri-business as a whole. As the local farm economy responds to these trends and develops more locally sourced and value-added agricultural sectors to respond to emerging opportunities, a serious challenge is the provision of local farming infrastructure. Infrastructure for farming includes everything from farm-related equipment sales to processing, storage and sales facilities for value added farm products. Value added farm products can be anything from local cheese to herbs to meats or they can be processed items like wines, jams and jellies, dried flowers or ice cream. They have a higher return than commodity crops and are especially compatible with smaller scale and locally branded farm operations, often providing living incomes on relatively small land holdings.

This strategy targets improvements in local agricultural infrastructure that could help farmers capture some of the value-added opportunities in farming. Such infrastructure improvements could include small-scale livestock processing facilities, cold storage facilities, cooperative value added processing facilities, and farm equipment sales, service, and rental, as well as strategic improvements to rural roads and traffic management to improve safety in moving farm equipment and handling customers for direct farm sales. In addition, this strategy outlines some actions that could help with the “red-tape” of permitting and approval procedures to facilitate value added local agricultural industries.

Benefits/Outcomes

With stronger infrastructure to support the farm economy, farmers will have more optimism about the future, lending stability to the industry and reducing the “impermanence syndrome.” The County could see future benefits such as:

- More diversity in types of products and farm operations
- Greater capture of economic value produced locally before it is shipped outside the County
- Greater economic returns from expansion of the overall rural economy through tourism, gross sales, etc.

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The number of new agricultural infrastructure elements
- The number of new agricultural and ag-related enterprises
- The number of different kinds of farm products produced and sold in the County
- The size (in dollars) of the total economic base of the rural economy including farm sales and exports



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A3: Expand Agricultural Infrastructure and Capacity

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
A 3.1. Review and refine zoning regulations to streamline permitting and approval procedures so that value-added facilities can be added to farming operations with a minimum of “red-tape”	Distinguish between high and low impact processing centers, according to both size and uses.	Department of Community Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Department of Agricultural Development
A 3.2. Promote the establishment and expansion of cooperative infrastructure such as cold storage, processing and equipment co-ops for sales, service, rental, and sharing	Consider allowing some facilities to be used by members of the general public in addition to full-time farmers to broaden base of potential use and support.	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS)	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission Department of Agricultural Development
A 3.3. Work with VDOT and law enforcement to make strategic improvements along key rural roads and in traffic protocols to improve the safety of moving farm equipment	Work closely with the farms and farmers most affected by potential improvements and/or regulations.	Department of Community Development	Transportation Committee (BOS) Department of Agricultural Development
A 3.4. Provide technical assistance and support to landowners to meet erosion and sediment control requirements and state conservation programs	Coordinate efforts with Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) monitoring to identify parcels or areas of highest priority.	Department of Community Development	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
A 3.5. Explore opportunities and resources to develop an agricultural grant fund to assist small farmers	Consider coordinating with business management and best practices education for small and new farmers.	Department of Agricultural Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Economic Development Authority Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
A 3.6. Develop and implement a signage program building awareness for Fauquier as an agricultural community	Closely coordinate with broader agriculture promotion and marketing campaigns.	Department of Agricultural Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Department of Community Development



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A4: Broaden Agricultural Education and Outreach

Strategy Narrative

Farming nationwide is somewhat of an older person's profession. With growing trends towards urbanization and declining revenues from farming, few new farmers are coming on line and the vital link between generations of farmers is being lost. Some areas of the country are seeing "the last generation on the land" and both farmland and the farm economy converting to more suburban contexts. Luckily, several partners in Fauquier County have taken steps toward reinforcing the link to new generations of farmers through educational and support programs. Education is a key, not only to nurturing new generations of farmers, but also to building a supportive spirit for preserving farming and farmland among the customers and consumers of farm products and the public as a whole. Better education can help reduce complaints against farming operations from non-farm neighbors and create a more welcoming spirit for farming among both existing residents and newcomers to the County.

This strategy focuses on providing expanded opportunities for education of both producers and consumers of farm goods that will help strengthen the diversity and resiliency of the local agricultural industry. In particular, it calls for actions that increase the level of outreach efforts to promote the County's direct sales and agri-tourism sectors, as well as training and outreach for both new farmers and aging farmers in planning the succession of their farm enterprises. This strategy dovetails with the other strategies in the Strong Rural Lands & Economy vision theme by providing the educational foundation underneath the other proactive conservation, marketing and capacity enhancing strategies in this vision theme.

Benefits/Outcomes

With greater awareness and understanding of the agricultural industry on the part of all participants – farmers, potential future farmers, general public, direct customers, etc. - farm producers will be able to expand and diversify their operations, leading to benefits such as:

- Greater understanding of farming on the part of local non-farm residents, reducing conflicts between property owners
- Greater participation in the agricultural economy by non-farm residents, through farm tours, direct sales, and agri-tourism
- Greater continuity between generations of farmers so that younger farmers come on line as older farmers retire
- Greater economic returns from expansion of the overall rural economy through tourism, gross sales, etc.

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The size (in dollars) of the total economic base of the rural economy
- The number of students at all levels enrolled in some kind of agricultural course or program
- Reduction in the number of reported complaints against farming operations from non-farm neighbors
- A lower average age of farmers
- Increased awareness among the public in the region about Fauquier as an agricultural County
- Number and volume of direct marketing enterprises
- Number and volume of agri-tourism businesses



Vision Theme A:

Strong Rural Lands & Economy

Strategy A4: Broaden Agricultural Education and Outreach

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
A 4.1. Continue Beginner Farmer Training Program and the Farm Link Program	Promote programs both within community and in surrounding metropolitan areas.	Virginia Cooperative Extension Service Fauquier Education Farm Department of Agricultural Development	
A 4.2. Provide assistance to farmers in planning the succession of their farm enterprises		Department of Agricultural Development	Virginia Cooperative Extension Service
A 4.3. Provide education and training related to farming through the public schools and Lord Fairfax Community College	Consider integrating examples of local farming practices and knowledge into lessons of related courses such as biology, ecology, and geology.	Lord Fairfax Community College Fauquier County Public Schools	Department of Agricultural Development
A 4.4. Promote Fauquier County as a regional resource for direct sales of agricultural products and visitation for agri-tourism	Create and regularly update list of restaurants and stores in the region that specifically promote and sell local agricultural products.	Department of Agricultural Development Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS)	Department of Economic Development Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
A 4.5. Educate general public about the importance of agriculture to the County economy	In addition to direct agricultural sales, connect discussion of farming operations to related services and products to better capture the full scale of economic impact.	Department of Agricultural Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS) Department of Community Development
A 4.6. Promote the development of an Economic Sustainability program involving training in agricultural economics to farmers	Consider making eligibility for some grant programs or other support services contingent upon participation in economic sustainability education.	Virginia Cooperative Extension Service	Lord Fairfax Community College Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS)



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B1: Create Dynamic Business Centers

Strategy Narrative

More than three-quarters of Fauquier County's residents are employed outside of the County. In order to provide more job opportunities within the County, measures should be taken to support the growth of existing businesses and the establishment of new business. These efforts should begin by designating areas within the Service Districts that can function as dynamic business centers. The size and design of the business centers may vary according to the character of its service district, but each would serve to provide business development sites that provide a full range of transportation, communications, water, and sewer service needs at a high level of service and in a cost-efficient manner.

Not only can these centers increase the desirability of the County as a location for business investments, but it would encourage a form of development that continues to preserve the County's rural and green spaces. They would also increase the number of jobs and services that are available within the Service Districts themselves. If desired, these areas could potentially incorporate store-front retail and multi-unit residential elements as well. This would allow them to function both as a center of business and as a center of community activities that could enhance the "sense of place" and unique community identity in each service district.

Benefits/Outcomes

The establishment of business centers in the County's Service Districts will not only provide existing and potential business owners with the space and services they need to support their operations, but will also clearly demonstrate the County's commitment to supporting appropriate business growth. This growth may provide numerous benefits, including:

- Increased number of local jobs
- Increased business tax revenues
- Decreased commuter traffic
- Enhanced ability to establish and expand industry clusters

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The percent of business areas with access to public water and sewer
- Commercial structure and property vacancy rates
- Internet coverage and available internet speeds
- Square footage of new compatible commercial space in Service Districts



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B1: Create Dynamic Business Centers

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
B 1.1. Make public water and sewer utilities accessible to the business areas of all Service Districts. Consider supporting agreements with property owners to phase infrastructure expansion within the business areas of Service Districts	Access to public water and sewer is critical for business attraction. These efforts could help encourage the initial investments to extend main lines through designated business areas so that they are more accessible to potential new developments.	Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority Board of Supervisors	Department of Economic Development Department of Community Development
B 1.2. Support the expansion of broadband and cellular infrastructure to ensure complete service coverage of high speed internet and cell service	Special attention may be given to cost effective strategies for extending broadband internet to rural and mountainous areas.	Board of Supervisors	Broadband Advisory Committee (BOS) Department of Economic Development Department of Community Development
B 1.3. Explore the development of business improvement districts or other organizational entity to help in business development, where coordination of utilities, roads and other infrastructure is needed among a number of property owners	These improvement districts can serve as quasi-governmental jurisdictions that allow businesses and property owners to have a more active role in the planning and implementation of strategic improvements.	Board of Supervisors Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce	Department of Community Development Department of Economic Development
B 1.4. Consider revising parking standards to support the addition of traditional development forms (mixed use and walkable), while maintaining adequate and well-marked parking for businesses	Depending on context, revisions may consider factors such as parking minimums, parking lot locations on site, street parking allowances, or possible structured parking in high-activity areas.	Department of Community Development	Planning Commission
B 1.5. Evaluate and ease commercial zoning regulations to accommodate the needs of targeted industries and to encourage development that is compatible and consistent with the County's vision	Existing regulations may encourage development forms that contradict the compact and community-oriented vision of the County or prevent forms desired by target industries.	Department of Community Development Department of Economic Development	Planning Commission
B 1.6. Explore "seeding" programs to rehabilitate strategically located but underused commercial structures or sites in Service Districts in order to encourage purchase and reuse	Could be used as a strategy to offset initial costs and encourage business investment in Service Districts rather than new greenfield developments.	Board of Supervisors Department of Economic Development	Economic Development Authority



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B2: Encourage the Growth and Addition of New Businesses

Strategy Narrative

There are many procedural and administrative processes that businesses encounter when moving to a new location. If a locality's business establishment processes are slow and overly-complicated, or if public employees and officials fail to provide adequate and clear support during this process, businesses may be discouraged from finalizing, or even considering, investments in the County.

In order to avoid losing these potential new investments, the County should continue to work closely with the business community in order to refine its procedures and to identify potential new development support services. A clear, responsive, and supportive establishment process will not only be appreciated by those businesses that are already interested in locating in the County, but may result in the County developing a reputation as a business-friendly community that will allow it to increase future levels of investment and growth.

A fast growing segment of the County's economy is older entrepreneurs and home-based businesses.

Benefits/Outcomes

The ability of Fauquier County to market itself to its desired target industries, as well as to provide those businesses with the information and administrative support needed to easily establish their operations in the County, will be critical in supporting strong and desirable business growth. Benefits may include:

- Diversification of employment and industry base
- Growth in overall number of businesses
- Increased business tax revenues
- Increased competitive position for business attraction in the northern Virginia region

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The number of newly registered businesses
- The size and number of enterprise centers
- The composition of County businesses according to industry classification
- Business tax revenues
- The number of shovel-ready acres available for targeted industries and businesses
- Growth in targeted industries
- Growth in employment and wages
- The growth of the number of new jobs relative to the number of new homes
- The ratio of County revenue from business taxes versus residential taxes
- The growth of the County's GDP relative to state and regional GDP growth



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B2: Encourage the Growth and Addition of New Businesses

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
B 2.1. Develop a “user-friendly” business establishment process that offers strong support, assistance, and guidance for potential new businesses	Focus on procedural clarity, response times, and administrative support efforts to make potential investors feel welcome and encouraged.	Department of Economic Development	Department of Community Development
B 2.2. Increase the size and number of the County’s “enterprise centers” to provide office space, resources, and strategic guidance for new and small businesses	Expand the geographic distribution of enterprise centers to provide greater access for rural residents in the southern and western portions of the County.	Department of Economic Development	Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce
B 2.3. Update and refine the County’s list of targeted industries	Narrow the targeted industry list to better reflect current goals, as well as to allow the County to develop more specific support initiatives for those targeted industries.	Department of Economic Development	Board of Supervisors Department of Community Development
B 2.4. Continue the efforts of the Department of Economic Development to identify services and resources attractive to the County’s targeted industries	After services or resources are identified, planning strategies or policies may need to be amended to respond more effectively to needs.	Department of Economic Development	Department of Community Development
B 2.5. Continue the tax incentive program for targeted industries	Consider refining strategies as targeted industry list is updated	Board of Supervisors	Department of Economic Development
B 2.6. Promote shovel ready sites to entice the establishment of targeted industries. Maintain the inventory of sites to ensure currency	Document size and location of sites, as well as distinctive features or access opportunities that may appeal to particular industries.	Department of Economic Development	Department of Community Development
B 2.7. Establish a regular reporting process for business growth and performance in the County	Use to track progress and study the effectiveness of incentive or service programs.	Department of Economic Development	Department of Community Development
B 2.8. Explore the development of a Green Business Park that highlights environmental sustainability and including incentives for such businesses	Identify resources or existing businesses in the County or region that could be leveraged by potential green industries	Department of Community Development Department of Economic Development	Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B3: Enhance Workforce Education Programs

Strategy Narrative

As the American economy continues to shift from resource-intensive manufacturing and production industries to skill-intensive high tech and service industries, workforce education has steadily become one of the most important factors in determining a community's economic performance. A community that is interested in attracting a particular industry or company must not only satisfy their needs in terms of infrastructure and public services, but also be able to offer access to a workforce that possesses the skills necessary for their operation.

Many communities have successfully developed partnerships between their community colleges or trade schools and local industries. These schools develop programs that are specifically designed to provide training and education to residents that enable them to be employed by that industry. Over time, these skills sets may not only allow the original businesses or companies to succeed, but may also attract other related businesses that also utilize those skills. In this way, these efforts can both strengthen and diversify a local economy.

Benefits/Outcomes

The availability of a skilled workforce can be a major draw to businesses who are considering locating in the County. It supports both businesses and residents alike through outcomes such as:

- Increased employment opportunities for local residents
- Decreased employee training costs for local businesses
- Enhanced ability to attract industry clusters related to workforce skills

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The number of official business partnerships with education programs
- The percentage of the County workforce that lives in Fauquier County
- The percentage of the County's residents that are employed in Fauquier County
- Educational attainment levels
- Employment rate in the County
- Median income of residents that live and work in the County



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B3: Enhance Workforce Education Programs

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
B 3.1. Conduct a thorough study of local businesses and industries, as well as targeted industries, to accurately identify education and training needs that may be provided by local schools and Lord Fairfax Community College	In addition to addressing existing needs, explore trends in technologies and markets to identify education programs that will allow local businesses and industries to remain competitive in the future.	Department of Economic Development (Workforce Coordinator)	Lord Fairfax Community College Fauquier County Public Schools Department of Human Resources
B 3.2. Facilitate a strong partnership between Lord Fairfax Community College and local businesses	Ensure that Lord Fairfax Community College remains current on general industry trends, as well as the workforce development needs of specific businesses.	Department of Economic Development Lord Fairfax Community College	Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce Greater Warrenton Chamber of Commerce
B 3.3. Support the expansion of course offerings in technical and trade programs in local high schools as relevant to targeted businesses and industries, especially in relation to the needs of students who do not plan to attend college	Explore possible collaborations with Lord Fairfax Community College as well to allow students to enter the community college programs with a strong base of knowledge that can accelerate and enhance the higher-learning process.	Fauquier County Public Schools Department of Economic Development	Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce Lord Fairfax Community College
B 3.4. Support the establishment of a business apprenticeship program for local students and residents	Provide work experience opportunities both for recent graduates newly entering the workforce, as well as older adults who are transitioning from one career to another.	Department of Economic Development	Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B4: Respond to the Needs and Practices of the New Rural Economy

Strategy Narrative

Rural economies have changed significantly in recent decades. Traditional farming and forestry operations are being joined, and sometimes supplanted, by new rural businesses and agricultural methods. The “new rural economy” has witnessed new agricultural techniques, value-added farm products, and on-site events, sales, and services that allow rural land-owners to diversify their sources of income and engage niche agricultural and tourism markets. These activities will allow the County’s farms to remain active and profitable, thus supporting both the preservation of rural landscapes and the economic vibrancy of rural communities.

These considerations are especially important in Fauquier County. Farming remains a major industry and a defining element of community life, but in 2012, the average farm reported a net-income loss. In order to support the continued success of Fauquier County’s farms and rural communities, it should consider updating its rural land-use policies and programs to respond to and encourage these new needs and practices. In some instances, policies may need to be changed in order to permit uses that were unforeseen at the time of their writing. In other cases, however, regulations may need to be added in order to better manage activities and maintain compatible uses in the County’s rural areas.

Benefits/Outcomes

Maintaining the rural heritage of Fauquier County is a central element of the community’s vision. This effort will require the preservation of the rural landscape, but also the continued operation of farms and other rural industries. This can provide many benefits to the County, including:

- Expanded tourism opportunities including agri-tourism and heritage tourism
- An increase in the number and diversity of jobs
- The preservation of farms and farm landscapes
- New economic opportunities for long-time County residents

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The number of new rural businesses
- Growth in targeted industries
- Growth in rural employment
- Vacancy rates of rural commercial properties and structures
- Improved access to public Wi-Fi in rural areas



Vision Theme B:

Expanded Business and Industry

Strategy B4: Respond to the Needs and Practices of the New Rural Economy

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
B 4.1. Identify businesses and services that support the rural economy	Consider new businesses or techniques that can be used on rural lands themselves, as well as businesses that can provide supportive services or processing capabilities.	Department of Agricultural Development Department of Economic Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS)
B 4.2. Develop and refine list of targeted uses for rural areas	Consider if uses are consistent with the County's rural vision, as well as if they respond to local economic demands. Potentially expand list to include new and innovative rural business models.	Department of Agricultural Development Department of Economic Development	Agricultural Development Advisory Committee (BOS)
B 4.3. Evaluate village and rural agriculture zoning regulations to ensure that they are compatible with the County's vision and the needs of targeted rural uses	Consider regulations in relation to new rural business forms, as well as to increasing development pressures from the Washington DC metro area.	Department of Community Development	Department of Agricultural Development Department of Economic Development
B 4.4. Explore "seeding" programs to rehabilitate and repurpose strategically located but underused commercial structures or sites in rural areas in order to encourage purchase and reuse	Focus especially on sites that could be used by targeted rural uses or that are strategically located to support the needs of the surrounding rural communities.	Board of Supervisors Department of Economic Development	Department of Community Development Economic Development Authority



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C1: Concentrate Business and Residential Growth in Service Districts

Strategy Narrative

The County's service district concept and efforts to protect rural lands have been successful, with more than 90 percent of recent growth going into the Service Districts. This strategy calls for a continuation of the policies and programs that have achieved this success, while make some changes to the County's policies and codes to remove obstacles to the County achieving its vision for the Service Districts.

Among the approaches for implementing this strategy are conducting outreach to raise awareness of the Service District growth policy; continuing to direct future growth into Service Districts while ensuring that there will be adequate public facilities and infrastructure in each Service District appropriate to its anticipated pace of growth; focusing efforts on developing each Service District as a livable community through "placemaking" initiatives such as enhancing its pedestrian and bicycle connections, parks, civic spaces and building a strong sense of place; and ensuring that the Service Districts are far more economical and appropriate for new growth than the rural areas.

Benefits/Outcomes

91 percent of Fauquier County's population growth between 2000 and 2010 was within the Service Districts and less than 9% in the rural areas. Maintaining the concentration of future growth in the Service Districts will benefit the County through:

- Protecting productive farmland and open space in the County from residential growth pressures
- Building stronger communities with more well-rounded community services and facilities in the Service Districts
- Supporting industry clusters such as knowledge and high tech whose youthful work forces prefer communities with a sense of place

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The proportion of future residential growth in the Service Districts versus rural areas
- The provision of placemaking amenities in Service Districts such as bicycle and pedestrian networks, parks and civic spaces
- The provision of infrastructure and services within new communities timed according to their growth and development



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C1: Concentrate Business and Residential Growth in Service Districts

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
C 1.1. Continue to support Service District concept and policy implementation measures	This action calls for continuing to support the long-standing policy direction in the County.	Board of Supervisors Department of Community Development	Non-profits such as the Piedmont Environmental Council, Citizens for Fauquier County, the Nature Conservancy, and the Land Trust of Virginia
C 1.2. Foster “placemaking” initiatives in strategic locations, including pedestrian and bicycle connections, parks, and civic spaces that build a strong sense of place	Placemaking entails creating great places that attract people to live, work, and play. They are supported by a well-designed public realm with a mix of uses, green and recreational spaces, safe walkable streets.	Department of Community Development	Department of Parks and Recreation Virginia Department of Transportation
C 1.3. Clarify role and character of each Service District within the Comprehensive Plan	Community Conversations points to a potential need to update area plans for the Service Districts to reflect the strategic direction of this plan.	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission
C 1.4. Conduct educational outreach on the County’s Service District growth concept	The service district concept is a key to achieving the County’s vision. It’s important to make sure all stakeholders are aware of the concept and the challenges to achieving it.	Department of Community Development	Planning Commission
C 1.5. Evaluate Service District boundaries to consider removing areas that are not planned for water and sewer service	The Service Districts should reflect where the services are available or planned to support urban level densities.	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C2: Cultivate Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)

Strategy Narrative

Traditional Neighborhood Design is a way of designing neighborhoods and communities that are more walkable with a mix of land uses, transportation choices, and parks and civic spaces. TND reflects the way communities were built for many generations until the automobile became the dominant form of travel. Today communities are bringing back these principles, which are in high demand, especially among the large Millennial and Baby Boomer generations that have shown strong preferences for walkable communities. This type of development does not preclude cars, which will continue to be an important means of travel, but balances designing places for cars with designing them for people. Incentives for this development option may be created through new comprehensive plan policies, zoning changes and grants or funding to build public amenities in the heart of existing and new communities in the County.

Benefits/Outcomes

Many communities throughout the nation have realized the benefits of supporting TND policies. As more new development adopts these principles, the County could see future benefits such as:

- New development that is closer to the look, feel and character of traditional towns and neighborhoods
- More attractive and walkable town and village centers and neighborhoods
- Healthier living as active transportation options (biking and walking) become possible to meet daily needs in new communities
- Less dependence on autos and lower pollution and traffic levels as average trips become shorter because uses and services are closer together

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- The inclusion of new TND policies in the County's policy documents and new TND incentives in its development regulations
- The amount of new development that exercises voluntary TND options such as overlay districts
- The extent of active biking and walking networks in new development
- Continued or improved tourist visitation in historic communities that have fostered TND-style infill development within their traditional core areas
- Walk score improvements within the Service Districts*

*WalkScore is an online tool that provides a score by address based on what is near the address that can be accessed by walking.



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C2: Cultivate Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
C 2.1. Add new TND policies identifying specific districts and how TND principles shall be applied in the Comprehensive Plan and to Service District Plans as they are updated	TND principles include traditional features of community design including compact development, walkable streets, a mix of uses, and a mix of housing types.	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission
C 2.2. Modify the zoning ordinance to establish a TND overlay zone that would apply in Service Districts	The overlay zone would make it easier for developers to apply the TND concepts.	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission
C 2.3. Add form standards to existing multifamily and commercial zoning districts to promote mixed land use, walkability and community interaction	Form standards are another technique for encouraging TND principles.	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission
C 2.4. Explore the use of grant funds to develop and enhance public gathering spaces in strategic locations		Department of Parks and Recreation	Department of Community Development
C 2.5. Continue to promote and enhance historic preservation through the use of incentives, historic district designations, and community education		Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Architectural Review Board



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C3: Diversify the County's Housing Stock

Strategy Narrative

The County's housing stock is overwhelmingly single family detached housing. Many of these houses are on large suburban-style lots. Both characteristics increase the price of housing and make it difficult for lower and middle income families to afford to live in Fauquier County. The County, like the nation and state, is aging. As the population ages its housing needs are likely to change. Similarly, younger people starting out in jobs and housing have differing needs. To prepare for future demographics, and to provide housing affordable to all people that work or attend school in Fauquier, it is important to expand the offering of housing. This will mean continuing to build single family detached housing in Service Districts, but also increasing the supply of other housing types, such as attached housing, apartments, and townhomes.

Among the options for implementing this strategy are enabling and encouraging a wider variety of housing types in the Service Districts including cottages, townhomes, apartments, and live/work units; allowing by right development of townhomes and apartments within the Service Districts where those housing types are compatible with the neighborhood and where water and sewer service will support the higher density; and enhancing opportunities for housing for farm workers, many of whom are seasonal employees, on farms.

Benefits/Outcomes

About 70 percent of the housing units in the Service Districts, and 83 percent in the County, are single family detached housing. Less than 6 percent of the land in Service Districts is zoned to allow townhouses and apartments by right. Adding a mixture of smaller lot single-family with some attached units and apartments will provide added balance to the housing inventory. The County could see the following benefits as it encourages more development of higher density housing types:

- More affordable housing options for the County's workforce
- Affordable housing for students at Lord Fairfax Community College that would like to live in Fauquier County, but now must commute to find affordable housing
- Higher density of development within the Service Districts that helps make new business development viable while alleviating pressure to develop rural areas
- Reduce commuting by providing more housing options for the County's workforce and student population
- Provide more housing for farm workers
- Greater walkability

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- Acres of land that is zoned to allow higher density single family housing, apartments, and townhomes
- Number of housing units built in the Service Districts that are affordable to households making less than 80 percent (\$75,600) of the area median income
- Percent of new housing units built in the Service Districts
- Support for zoning amendments to allow for compatible, higher density development where appropriate



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C3: Diversify the County's Housing Stock

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
C 3.1. Examine the zoning district standards and ensure that they facilitate diversification of the housing stock	This would entail reviewing the standards for density and type of housing that is allowed.	Department of Community Development	Planning Commission
C 3.2. Develop design standards for multi-family and higher density housing to ensure compatibility with existing neighborhoods		Department of Community Development	Citizen Advisory Committees
C 3.3. Review locations for planned higher density zoning to ensure integration into diverse mixed use and mixed density communities		Department of Community Development	Department of Economic Development Planning Commission
C 3.4. Provide incentives, such as a density bonus, for developers that include workforce housing in their projects		Department of Community Development	Department of Economic Development Planning Commission Board of Supervisors
C 3.5. Review zoning to allow for on-farm housing for farm workers		Department of Community Development	Department of Economic Development Department of Agricultural Development Planning Commission
C 3.6. Extend sufficient water and sewer capacity to areas within the Service Districts where the County desires higher density residential and commercial development, and consider extending these services into other areas that may be appropriate for inclusion in a Service District. (see C 5 for additional related actions)		Department of Community Development	Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority Board of Supervisors



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C4: Provide More Transportation Choices in the Service Districts

Strategy Narrative

Designing places that are welcoming to pedestrians is a critical strategy for building thriving communities. Transportation planning and community building during the last half of the 20th century revolved around accommodating vehicles. This resulted in wide streets, fast traffic, narrow or no sidewalks, no bicycle lanes, and little foot traffic for centralized businesses. While vehicle access and parking will continue to be important for supporting businesses in the County's service district, people must also feel safe and comfortable exploring these places on foot if they are to truly thrive. Walkable communities are also increasingly in demand by the Millennial and Baby Boomer generations. Thus, building new walkable communities, or improving the walkability of existing places, is also a valuable economic development strategy.

This strategy also recognizes that many people do not have access to a vehicle or are unable to operate a vehicle due to their age or a disability. For these citizens, sidewalks and bicycle lanes are lifelines to critical goods and services, such as food, medicine, and health care. Bus transit or paratransit may also be needed to connect people in outlying areas to these goods and services, which are available in Service Districts. Longer distance transit, connecting people to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area also supports this strategy by providing an alternative to congested highways and bringing workers to jobs in Fauquier County.

Among the ways to implement this strategy are to identify obstacles to walkability and bikeability within the Service Districts, make walkable/bikeable streets a high transportation priority within the Service Districts, seek state funding through Smart Scale, Transportation Alternatives or other funding sources to improve walk and bike access and target local funds towards making the streets friendly to pedestrians and bicycles and provide transit alternatives for people traveling between the County and the Washington metropolitan area.

Benefits/Outcomes

Walkable and bikeable neighborhoods and communities are in high demand. Walkability supports property values. It also can alleviate pressure on local streets and highways to accommodate more vehicles. Walkable streets that support vibrant towns with a mix of housing, jobs, and services are places where people can make shorter or fewer vehicle trips. Walkable and bikeable streets also support public health by providing places for people to exercise. The County could see the following benefits as it improves walkability:

- Relatively less congested streets as people choose to walk or bike to work, social engagements, and shopping
- More business for local shops and services from people walking in business districts
- Healthier residents who walk or bike more each week
- More social engagement

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- Miles of new sidewalk built in the Service Districts
- Higher Walk Score in Service Districts
- Miles of new bike facilities (including dedicated lanes and signing/striping to accommodate cyclists) countywide
- Percent of residents that report walking or biking to work
- Observed traffic speeds in business districts.
- Transit ridership and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) boardings from Fauquier County



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C4: Provide More Transportation Choices in the Service Districts

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
C 4.1. Map the sidewalk and bike facility network in each service district. Also map pedestrian and bike comfort and safety for all streets in Service Districts using available data.	A statewide data set of bicycle and pedestrian comfort is available through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment	Department of GIS Mapping	Department of Community Development Department of Parks and Recreation
C 4.2. Through the transportation plan, develop a traffic calming approach and program for reducing traffic speeds on residential streets and in business districts, without impeding access for vehicles of any type. An emphasis on those streets with low pedestrian/bike comfort and safety shall be made		Department of Community Development	Virginia Department of Transportation
C 4.3. With use of the County's Parks and Recreation Department's Connections Plan, identify high priority sidewalk or bike facility improvements and gaps to address first projects with available funding		Department of Parks and Recreation Department of Community Development	Virginia Department of Transportation
C 4.4. Require sidewalks on both sides of all new streets in the Service District to accommodate new development activity		Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission
C 4.5. In limited cases where new sidewalks or trails are not feasible or too far from other developed areas, allow fees in lieu of sidewalks and trails into which developers can contribute towards new and improved facilities in the Service Districts		Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission
C 4.6. Plan in the short term for better transit service within the County while planning in the long-term for increasing VRE access to County residents		PATH Foundation Mobility Initiative Department of Community Development	Virginia Regional Transit Virginia Department of Transportation
C 4.7. Support expansion of existing bus service throughout the County	Promote ride-sharing and the use of park-and-ride lots	PATH Foundation Mobility Initiative Virginia Regional Transit VolTran	Board of Supervisors Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission Department of Social Services
C 4.8. Seek grant and other funding to establish a dedicated fund for the construction of trails and sidewalks, as well as traffic calming, to facilitate non-vehicular movement.		Department of Community Development	Virginia Department of Transportation Department of Parks and Recreation



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C5: Provide Sufficient Water and Wastewater Treatment for Service Districts

Strategy Narrative

Water and wastewater treatment capacity are necessary pre-conditions for development. The County's capacity in these areas is currently insufficient to support a full build out of many Service Districts. Another issue is the infrastructure needed to carry water to development and to carry wastewater away. Many portions of Service Districts do not have connections or sufficient connections. Addressing this issue will be critical for the Service Districts to reach their full potential.

Among the steps for implementing this strategy are to identify water sources sufficient to support the growth in Service Districts, expand water sources to provide sufficient water, upgrade or expand wastewater treatment to accommodate future needs, institute best practices to reduce stormwater runoff and filter water naturally to improve water quality in the Service Districts, and to coordinate the County's land use policies and the Water and Sanitation Authority's investment policies.

Benefits/Outcomes

The County has a long-standing policy of focusing growth and development in its Service Districts. This policy relies on sufficient water and wastewater treatment in these areas. In the absence of sufficient water and wastewater treatment capacity, growth pressures may spread into rural areas if Service Districts cannot meet water and wastewater demands. The County could see the following benefits as it improves its provision of water and wastewater in its Service Districts:

- Growth is adequately accommodated in Service Districts
- Clean water supplies
- Attraction of target industries and businesses that need sufficient water and wastewater treatment
- Improvements in groundwater recharge and quality as sustainable management practices are implemented

Measuring Success

The success of this strategy and actions will be measured through criteria such as:

- Sufficient water and wastewater treatment capacity in the Service Districts
- Integrated planning among community development, economic development, and water/sanitation departments
- Future indicators of ground and surface water quality and aquifer recharge as development occurs
- Number of failing septic systems remedied in the County



Vision Theme C:

Thriving Communities and Services

Strategy C5: Provide Sufficient Water and Wastewater Treatment for Service Districts

Recommended Actions	Key Notes	Potential Champions	Potential Supporting Cast
C 5.1. Coordinate the County's growth and development policies in the comprehensive plan with improvement and expansion planning of utilities	This action refers mainly to water and sewer utilities, and coordinating their extension or provision with growth and development policies.	Board of Supervisors	Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority Department of Community Development Fauquier County Chamber of Commerce
C 5.2. Develop a joint County and Water and Sanitation Authority strategic investment policy and phasing /funding plan for integration into future County Capital Improvement Programs		Board of Supervisors	Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority Department of Community Development Department of Management and Budget
C 5.3. Identify additional water sources to accommodate needs of anticipated growth in the Service Districts		Department of Community Development	United States Geological Survey Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority
C 5.4. Coordinate with the Virginia Department of Health on educational outreach to develop County policy and a strategic plan for addressing failing septic systems		Department of Community Development	Virginia Department of Health Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority
C 5.5. Explore the possible use of state-enabled Special Taxing Districts or similar organizational approaches to extend services for business development, as appropriate	These financing tools are commonly used to pay for infrastructure necessary to support development and redevelopment.	Department of Community Development	Board of Supervisors Department of Economic Development